CHARLES HOUSE

Green Bay Soldier Could Have Altered U.S. History

When President William McKinley was shot to death by an assassin in 1910, it was an anti-climax permitted only by a humanitarian instinet of a Civil War soldier from Wisconsin.

McKinley, then a young officer of the 23rd Ohio Volonteers, was in the peep sight of the rifleman who changed his mind at the last second and killed McKinley's horse, Instead. The rifleman was a Belgium-born Confederate soldier, Ferdinand Haever of Tonet, Kewannee County.

The old story has been brought to light by Haever's grandson. Phil Haever, 72, a retired grocer of 825 Henry St., Green Bay. It has been altested to by the Civil War soldier's two remaining daughters, Mrs. Angeline Hodek, 82, of 305 Madison St.. Green Bay; and Mrs. Victor Hannon, 83, Taylor R-1., Town of Howard.

From family records and from some notes kept in a soldier's Bible, the historical vignette occurred in this manner.

Took Careful Aim

Haever, then an infantryman of Co. H., 14th Louisiana Regiment was engaged in battle with the 23rd Ohio at a site adjacent to the famed Viegiaia Military Institute. Hiding behind some bushes with other Confederate troops, Haever observed a young Union officer ride a conspicious horse inte the foreground of the battle.

The young officer, then unknown to Haever, was the regimental commander, William McKinley.

In order to get a better shot at the herreman, Haever stepped out from behind the bushes and tock careful nim. In later years he was to explain the story in this manner:

"I was so close to him that it seemed more like murder than like war. I hesttated. Then I thought of something that Stonewell Jackson had said—that a dismounted cavalryman is as good as a dead cavalryman.

Killed Horse Instead

"I lowered my rifle, drew a bead on the horse and killed McKinley's horse instead of McKinley.

"A few minutes later, Union troops swung around behind us and captured me and some of the others. They marched us to the unhorsed officer and I saw one of his aides point to me.

He said, "Mac, this is the one who killed your horse. I saw him when he came out of those bushes.'

"McKinley asked me if this was true.

"I don't know," I told him, "but if I am, you can thank God that I didn't shoot you."

Haever was imprisoned at Columbus, Ohio until the end of the war on April 2, 1865. He returned to the Green Bay area where ultimately he became a Tonet form owner, a notary public, a real estate operator, an auctioneer and a school teacher.

Though it appears singular that Haever served in the Confederate forces, his grandson and his daughter, Mrs. Hodek, have made some assumptions though, apparently, he had never explained the reasons for a Northern man in a rebel army.

Became a Seaman

Haever had been orphaned in Belgium; had never known his parents. Unofficially adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Draye who were bound for the U.S., young Haever, then about 13 years old, accompanted them to Green Bay. But what means it is not known, but he came to live in where he was taught to read and write English by Mrs. Mary Tank.

Just before the outhreak of the Civil War, young Haever took a job on a ship with a Capt. Doyle of Milwaukee. He apparently ventured into New Orleans and was there when the was broke out. Fired up by local feelings and with no apporent roots anywhere, Haever joined the rebel array.

Haever died in 1909 at 67. He was well aware that his quick humanitarian impulse may have had a profound influence on the course of history.